

**St. Rita School for the Deaf
L.O.F.T. Early Childhood Program
2010-2011 Family Handbook**

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I. PROGRAM INFORMATION

A. LICENSING

The L.O.F.T. (Language Opportunities For Tots) is a Total Communication language development program serving children ages 0-5 years, licensed by the State of Ohio, Department of Education. L.O.F.T. is in compliance with all fire, safety, and building codes of the State of Ohio and the Village of Evendale, Ohio. For a copy of our most recent licensing review, please contact Diana Saunders at Ohio Dept. of Ed., Office of Early Learning and School Readiness, at (614) 466-0224, or email her at Diana.saunders@ode.state.oh.us. A copy of Ohio Department of Education's Preschool Licensing Rules can be found online at <http://education.ohio.gov>. Search for "Preschool Licensing Rules" to open the pdf file. The website has recently updated these rules and changed their links, so searching for "Preschool Licensing Rules" on the website is the best option for locating them online.

B. PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

The L.O.F.T. Program is designed to meet the developmental needs of young children who are hearing, Deaf, hard-of-hearing, or apraxic, from age birth to five years old. Using total communication, the program strives to provide experiences that enrich and enhance each child's language, cognitive, social, emotional, physical and creative development. The program follows St. Rita School for the Deaf's motto: "Teaching Communication for Life". St. Rita School for the Deaf does not discriminate in hiring or admissions on the basis of age, color, national origin, race, gender, or disability.

Within L.O.F.T.'s daily schedule, each child will be exposed to opportunities to create, explore, learn problem solving, and experience personal interaction skills. Educational concepts will be presented through developmentally appropriate play in the infant and toddler programs, and through the Montessori curriculum in the preschool classrooms. Through a balance of self- and teacher- directed activities, the children are given an opportunity to develop a positive self-concept and social communication skills.

Besides providing care that is supportive, nurturing, warm, and responsive to each child's needs, the staff strive to serve as positive role models in the educational and personal areas. By offering a teaching staff of both Deaf and hearing degreed teachers and teaching assistants who use both signing and voice, the L.O.F.T program gives all children the means to communicate with everyone in their school environment, and offers positive examples of what they can all accomplish in the future.

II. SCHOOL-YEAR PROGRAM (MID-AUGUST through EARLY JUNE)

A. PROGRAM HOURS & STRUCTURE

L.O.F.T. is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm during the academic school year. The school year begins in the middle of August and continues through the first week of June. The days the school is closed are noted on the L.O.F.T. calendar distributed each August, and are slightly different from the main school's calendar. The school calendar is also available on the school's website,

www.srsdeaf.org. L.O.F.T. is always closed for one week in August for staff training, 2 weeks in December for Christmas break, and Good Friday and Easter Monday. Spring Break attendance is optional, and is always the week following Easter.

L.O.F.T. includes a nursery, one-year old class (L.O.F.T I), two-year old class (L.O.F.T II Transitional Preschool), and two preschool classrooms. The preschool classrooms are both Montessori classrooms and are commonly referred to as “Preschool” or “L.O.F.T Preschool”. The LOFT II Transitional Preschool uses a blend of Montessori materials and a more traditional classroom teaching style to prepare younger children for preschool.

The primary educational portion of the L.O.F.T program, including preschool, is from 7:45 AM to 3:00 PM. The teachers remain with the children during these times, and any field trips or special classroom presentations will take place during these hours. Children should arrive no later than 8:00 AM each day in order to receive the greatest educational benefit from our program, and to make their transition into the school day more comfortable for them.

After-school care is from 3-6 PM each day, and is provided by separate staff and often in a separate classroom than the rest of your child’s educational day. There is more of a recreational focus in the after-school program, and children can often be found outside on the playground, in the gym, or in independent play. After-school care is part of the entire L.O.F.T program, however, and does not have a separate fee.

B. CLASSROOM PLACEMENT

Children begin the school year in the class that corresponds to their age, and remain in that classroom for the entire school year. They then advance as a group with their classmates to the next classroom at the beginning of the following school year. This allows them to develop social relationships with a consistent peer group who travel with them from one class to the next, and to complete the entire school year’s curriculum in each classroom. Therefore, parents should not expect their child to transition from one classroom to the next mid-year when they have a birthday. Children who begin L.O.F.T or preschool mid-year will be placed in the class corresponding to their age at the beginning of the current school year.

A child must be 3 years old by September 30 of the current school year to enter one of the preschool Montessori classrooms at the beginning of the school year, although many 2-year olds with September birthdates may be a better fit for LOFT II. Children turning 3 after October 1 of the current school year, and entering mid-year, may be admitted into L.O.F.T II for transitional preschool, so that they are educated with their same-age peers, rather than beginning a Montessori preschool mid-year with older students. Preschool children will remain in the same Montessori preschool classroom for 2-3 years before entering Kindergarten.

In rare circumstances, we have advanced a child to the next classroom mid-year, usually from the nursery to L.O.F.T I. When this occurs, the child will then remain in their new classroom for the remainder of the current school year *as well as the entire following school year*. This is a difficult transition for

students, however, and is not the preferred method of moving students from one classroom to the next.

C. CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

The L.O.F.T. program uses **Innovations: The Comprehensive Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers** for the nursery, L.O.F.T I, and L.O.F.T II. This curriculum, created by Dr. Kay Albrecht and Dr. Linda Miller, is nationally recognized and is based on developmentally appropriate play in early childhood education. Each classroom has one designated teacher who creates lesson plans using this curriculum and, along with the classroom aides, implements those lesson plans in the classroom setting. Language development, both spoken English and American Sign Language, is an important component of the infant and toddler curriculum, as are social and emotional development. Early Montessori materials are introduced in the LOFT II classroom as well. This curriculum is aligned with Ohio's Early Learning Content Standards, which can be found online at <http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEPrimary.aspx?Page=2&TopicID=1390&TopicRelationID=1389>.

The L.O.F.T. Preschool classrooms use a Montessori curriculum. These classrooms are led by degreed and certified teachers, and each child has individual assigned work as well as free choice within the structure of the classroom. Each child's assigned work reflects their unique developmental level, based on repeated assessments completed by the teachers throughout the school year. As each child's development progresses, their assigned work advances with them, so each child moves through the curriculum at their own pace without a) struggling to keep up with the pace of the class as a whole, or b) mastering content ahead of their peers. The teachers use Montessori materials to teach the concepts outlined both in the Montessori preschool curriculum as well as in the Early Learning Content Standards published by the Ohio Department of Education.

All children in L.O.F.T, regardless of age, will be assessed by their teachers periodically throughout the school year to make sure that their development is appropriate for their age. All children are assessed using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire that is completed by parents and scored by the teachers 2-3 times per year. Twice per year, preschool children ages 3-6 are also given the "Get It, Got It, Go" pre-literacy assessment as directed by the Ohio Department of Education, as well as the Ages & Stages: Social Emotional Questionnaire (ASQ-SE) and the Early Childhood Outcome Summary Form (ECOSF). In addition, a curriculum-based academic assessment is administered 3 times per year to all preschool children in the program, and twice per year for those younger preschool students in L.O.F.T II. The results of these assessments will be shared with parents during parent-teacher conferences, and with school districts that contract a preschool child to St. Rita School for the Deaf. Progress reports for IEP goals are issued 4 times per year for those children with an IEP, and general progress reports are emailed to all parents of preschoolers from the Montessori Records Xpress Program on a regular basis throughout the school year. If you have specific developmental concerns, even if they are not measured by our assessments, please share them with your child's teachers.

D. ENROLLMENT PROCEDURE

Children may visit the L.O.F.T. program daily for up to 2 weeks prior to enrollment, but they can only attend L.O.F.T. after that if they are officially enrolled. The procedures for enrollment are as follows:

- A. Parents and child (children) visit the program and meet the Coordinator and L.O.F.T. teachers.
- B. Parents complete a prospective parent form with the staff member giving the tour.
- C. When applicable for children over 2, parents bring their child in for an individual assessment with the teacher and/or speech therapist so that they can make a recommendation for admission to the admissions team.
- D. Parents submit an application, with child's birth certificate and immunization records, and an audiogram if the child is Deaf, along with copies of the child's IEP or IFSP, speech evaluations, or other developmental evaluations.
- E. The Admissions Team, consisting of the Executive Director, the L.O.F.T./Preschool Coordinator, and the teacher and therapist who evaluated the child, meet to determine admission. Parents are notified within 1 week of application whether or not their child is admitted.
- F. If admitted, parents complete school registration forms. All forms required for enrollment must be completed prior to the first day of school, including a current physical examination form from the child's doctor (current within the 12 months preceding enrollment).
- G. Arrange a start date for your child with the L.O.F.T. Coordinator.

E. WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE

Parents or Guardians are required to notify the Executive Director each Spring if their child will be returning to the L.O.F.T. program for the following school year. A notice is sent to parents in March of each year for them to indicate their intention to return for the following year. A separate notice is also sent to parents each Spring asking them to indicate whether or not their child will be enrolling in the Summer L.O.F.T. program.

If parents want to withdraw their child from L.O.F.T. prior to the end of the current school year, they need to contact the L.O.F.T. Coordinator, or the Executive Director, to inform them of the child's withdrawal date. At least 2 weeks' notice should be given prior to withdrawal, to allow the L.O.F.T. staff to prepare the child and the class for the student's transition out of the program. If parents want the child's records transferred to another school, they need to request this in writing and provide contact information for the new school. Parents will be responsible for any tuition and lunch fees accrued through their child's withdrawal date.

The administration reserves the right to dismiss any student from the school's enrollment at any time. Possible reasons for dismissal would include, but are not limited to, student or family's disagreement with the school's philosophy, truancy, and/or student's or family's aggressive or threatening behavior toward other students or staff.

III. PROGRAM PROCEDURES

A. ENTERING THE SCHOOL

Please take your child directly into his/her designated classroom each morning and make sure that the teacher sees your child and is aware of his or her arrival. For children in the nursery and one-year-old class, parents are to use the sign-in sheet near the bulletin board in the entrance of the L.O.F.T. building. For older children, the teachers will record their attendance. Specific instructions for drop-off and pickup depend on which classroom your child is in, and are as follows:

For Parents of Children in Preschool (Rooms 201 & 422):

You will need to sign in at the front office and pick up a visitor's badge before proceeding to your child's preschool class each morning. All preschoolers are dropped off in the **U.S.A. (upper social area)** on the first floor before 7:45 AM. On the days that the U.S.A. is being used for other events, drop off will be in the gym.

If you arrive after 7:45 PM, you will need to take your child up to their classroom. One preschool class is located on the fourth floor, Room 422. The other is located on the second floor, Room 201. Please make every effort to have your child at school before 7:45 so that they can begin the school day with their class. *This makes a tremendous difference in your child's comfort level and behavior throughout the day.* Children arriving after 8:00 AM are considered tardy.

After school, the preschool classes can be picked up in the **Middle Social Area (MSA)** in the basement after 3:00 PM. There is an outside entrance to the MSA in the back of the main building that you can use in the afternoons to pick up your child – it is the door across the driveway from the small toddler playground and has an awning over it. Please ring the doorbell for admittance.

For Preschool Children Riding the Bus:

St. Rita School for the Deaf does not provide transportation to and from the LOFT program. Children riding a bus are transported by their public school district as part of their IEP. All school buses will be unloaded by a staff member, and those children taken either to their classroom teacher, or to the gym with adult supervision if they arrive before 7:30 AM. In the afternoons, children riding the bus are escorted from their classroom to the gym and placed on their bus by a staff member. **If you do not want your child to ride the bus, and they are normally scheduled to do so, you will need to contact your school district's transportation services (usually the bus garage) to notify them, and call the front office at St. Rita School for the Deaf to notify us as well.**

For Parents of Children in L.O.F.T. II (Fourth Floor, Room 410):

Children in L.O.F.T. II can be dropped off **in the little L.O.F.T. building** between 7:30 and 8:00 AM, and can be picked up in the same **little L.O.F.T. building** after 3:30 PM. Between 8 AM and 3:30 PM, they will be in their classroom on the 4th floor.

If you are dropping off or picking up your child between 8:00 AM and 3:30 PM, you will need to enter the main building, sign in at the main office as a visitor, and go to the 4th floor classroom, Room 410. In the afternoons between 3-3:30 PM, you can also enter the building through the MSA entrance at the back of the building, across

from the little L.O.F.T. playground, and access the elevators from the basement to the 4th floor. After 3:30 PM, the children are taken to the little L.O.F.T. building and can be picked up there from 3:30-6 PM.

For Parents of Children in the Nursery and L.O.F.T. I:

You may drop your child off and pick them up in their classrooms at anytime throughout the day. Please be aware that the one-year old class has most of its activities scheduled in the morning, so your child will benefit more from the program if he or she is here before 8:00 in the morning. If your child's class is outside or in the gym, a sign will be on the door so you will know where to look.

Please remember to sign your child in and out daily. We are required by law to use this method, so that personnel can track the children in case of a fire or other emergency. If you don't sign in and out, we may not know to look for your child if he or she is missing during an emergency. The teacher who knows that your child is at school may be injured in a true emergency and not able to tell others that your child is present, so please sign them in and out on the list everyday!

You may see the L.O.F.T. I staff in their building earlier than 7:30 AM, as they often arrive early to prepare the classrooms for the school day. However, teachers cannot accept children into the L.O.F.T. program until 7:30 AM. Children arriving early will need to wait outside with their parents until 7:30 AM.

B. REPORTING ABSENCES

Parents are asked to inform us if the child is to be absent due to illness, or will be arriving late (after 8:00 AM). We can be reached at (513) 326-8267 for infants and one-year-olds in L.O.F.T. I. For children in L.O.F.T. II, call (513) 771-7600, x349. For children in preschool, please call the main office at (513) 771-7600. If you do not get an answer in your child's program area, please leave a message at the main office at 771-7600. Please be aware that school districts that send children to preschool at St. Rita School for the Deaf often ask for those students' attendance records, and we are required to release those records to them.

C. RELEASING CHILDREN FROM THE PROGRAM

Children will not be released to anyone other than his/her parents or guardian, or someone authorized by the parent or guardian in writing. If a child is to be picked up by someone other than the parent, guardian, or someone they have authorized in writing on their child's pick up list, a minimum of 24-hour notice is required, and permission must be given in writing by the parent or guardian. Proper identification will be required of the new person picking up the child, such as a photo ID, a driver's license or any other secure identifying method. **Anyone other than a parent who is picking up a child from L.O.F.T. must be 18 years of age or older, including older siblings.**

If there is an emergency, then the advance notice does not apply. However, a phone call from the parent describing the person coming to get the child is necessary, and that person's identification will be checked. If someone else (not a parent or guardian) calls L.O.F.T. to request a child's release to an unauthorized person because the parents are unable to call themselves in an emergency situation

(such as sudden illness or injury), all efforts will be made by our staff to contact an authorized person on the pick-up list to pick up the child.

If a person other than the parent or guardian is picking up a child and appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, the child will not be released into their custody. In such cases, the following procedure will take place:

The staff member will 1) contact a parent, 2) contact a person designated on the emergency form, or 3) if the first two options are not viable, we will contact the L.O.F.T. Coordinator or Executive Director to decide on an appropriate action.

Children under four years of age or under 40 pounds in weight must, by Ohio law, be transported in vehicles while buckled securely into a car seat that meets state requirements. Ohio also requires that children ages four through seven who are less than 4'9" tall must ride in a federally approved booster seat.

This is a new law, so please be aware that this will affect your preschool-age child. Older children must be buckled into seatbelts while in any vehicle. If an adult arrives to pick up a child and does not have a car seat for a child who needs one, we have a limited number of car seats that we can loan out for the trip home. If the car seat is not the appropriate fit for the child (i.e. toddler car seat for an infant), then L.O.F.T. staff must contact another person on the authorized list to pick up the child. Authorities will be notified if a child is observed traveling in a vehicle without proper safety restraints. This law is for the safety of your child, so please make sure he or she is properly buckled in at all times.

Under the laws of the state of Ohio, both legal parents have the right to pick up their child, unless a court document restricts that right (Ohio Revised Code 5102:2-12-30). A legal parent is one who is listed on the child's birth certificate, or whose status as a parent has been established in court. If the child's parents are not married, and the enrolling parent chooses not to include the child's other parent on the authorized pick-up list, the enrolling parent must provide an official court document that restricts the other parent's access to the child, such as a custody decree granting sole custody to one parent or a current restraining order. Without that document, L.O.F.T. must, by law, provide access to the child to either parent listed on the birth certificate, provided that parent can document their identity to the L.O.F.T. staff. A copy of custody orders and restraining orders are kept in the child's classroom as well as in their main school file.

D. WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL: CLOTHING & BACKPACKS

LOFT students do not wear uniforms – that starts in kindergarten. It is recommended the children be dressed in washable, comfortable clothing that you don't mind getting dirty, due of the wide range of activities in L.O.F.T. A variety of coverings are provided for art and water activities, but children still get messy throughout the day. In addition, children often get dirty when playing outside. Please do not send your child in clothing that is easily stained or cannot be replaced!

Children who are walking should wear sturdy shoes that allow the child to walk or run without falling. Flip-flops, some sandals (like Crocs without straps), and platform or high-heeled shoes can be difficult for young children to walk and run in, so please make sure your child can walk and run in them on an uneven surface

without falling *before* sending them to school in flip-flops or sandals. Our playground surfaces are soft and uneven, so sturdy shoes can help prevent a child from falling. Just because a shoe looks cute on your child does not mean it is appropriate for school! All classes have scheduled gym time each week, and all children must wear sturdy gym shoes on these days.

Please remember that we go outside as often as the weather permits, including cold days. In the fall and spring, children will need light jackets, caps, rain boots (for damp days); in the winter, they will need heavy winter jackets, caps, mittens, and scarves, as well as snow boots when there is snow on the ground. **ALL CLOTHING SHOULD BE MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.**

Every child, except infants in the nursery, should bring a backpack to school each day. This should be large enough to carry an extra change of clothes and artwork that will be sent home with your child. Please check your child's backpack daily for information from your child's teacher, and empty out any papers each day. **ALL BACKPACKS SHOULD BE MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.**

E. EXTRA CLOTHING

Water activities, sand play, and occasional "accidents" necessitate that extra sets of clothing, including underwear and socks, be kept at the school at all times. Please mark all your children's things with his/her name. We cannot be responsible for items not marked. Please change out extra clothing as the seasons change or your child grows, so we do not have to place turtlenecks on children in May, and shorts in December!

If wet or dry clothing is sent home, please be sure to send in an extra set the following day. As the children grow so quickly, we will try to remind you when the extra set of clothing has become too small. Some parents donate clothes they no longer can use. In emergencies we can use these, but we not always have extra clothing in your child's size, and we do not have extra underwear and socks. If your child is wearing extra "school" clothing when you pick them up that day, please wash the clothing and return it to L.O.F.T. so that we can use it again.

F. WHAT NOT TO BRING TO SCHOOL: TOYS AND CANDY

Other than bringing a stuffed animal or doll for naptime, please do not send toys to school from home. Children are strongly discouraged from bringing toys from home because the other children are too young to understand that the toy does not belong to the entire class. Many classroom disturbances are caused by disputes over such items. If your child brings a toy to school, it will need to remain in their backpack or cubby until they go home. Teachers will not be responsible for any child's personal toys. The only exception to this is made for organized "SHOW AND TELL" as approved by the teacher.

Likewise, please do not send candy or gum to school. Gum chewing is not allowed at St. Rita School for any reason, and candy can contain food substances that other children may be allergic to, such as peanuts or peanut oil, or create problems with other children who want the candy. The same problem occurs for soft drinks brought to school, so please keep all candy, gum, and pop at home.

G. MEALS & SNACKS

Your child's diet is very important to us, and is part of both our licensing standards and our school's health and wellness policy. The school provides a morning snack, a balanced lunch, and an afternoon snack to every child who is eating solid foods in order to meet their nutritional needs. Parents need to provide formula and baby food for their children who are not yet eating solid foods. Menus are sent home each week. The cost for school lunches during the school year is \$2 per day for preschool, and is free for students in L.O.F.T I and L.O.F.T II. Your child will not be permitted to purchase food or soft drinks from the school's vending machines. Please do not send money to school with your child – you will receive a lunch bill each month for the lunches that your child has eaten at school.

We are required by law to serve children a balanced lunch including protein, fruit or vegetables, bread, and dairy, even if they do not like the food being served. We can only withhold an item, such as milk, if we have written documentation of a food allergy signed by a physician. We do not force a child to eat everything they are served, but we do have to serve it unless we have a doctor's order or a parent's statement of religious or cultural beliefs, that tells us not to do so.

A child on a special diet or with food allergies will be given consideration in meal planning. Parents must meet with the teachers to explain the diet or the allergies before the child actually begins the school year. **All allergies must be documented in writing by the child's physician, and a Food Allergy Action Plan must be completed by the physician and submitted to the school nurse.** Children on a special diet must have a written note signed by the doctor verifying this diet in order for us to serve substitute foods, or a statement signed by the parents of religious or cultural food preferences. This includes vegetarian diets.

In most cases of simple food allergies, normal food substitutions for those allergies can be easily handled. For example: If a child is allergic to peanuts, we will substitute jelly sandwiches for peanut butter and jelly. Other fruits can be substituted for strawberries. Water or juice can easily be substituted for dairy products, or you can send in a container of soy milk (labeled with your child's name) to keep in the refrigerator for us to serve to your child.

Allergies or special diets that are more complex will have to be handled by the parent, such as gluten- or casein-free diets, kosher diets, or vegan diets. In these cases, when the parent sends lunch or snacks for this child, then we are assured that the child will not be given a potentially dangerous food item. We cannot be responsible for ensuring that every food item served by our cafeteria is free of gluten, casein, or animal products, as food labels are not always clear on the ingredients, so parents are strongly encouraged to provide a list of acceptable foods or send in their child's lunch and snacks.

If you pack your child's lunch or bottles, please label the bottles, bag or lunchbox, and any reusable food containers, with your child's name. Also, please let the teachers know if the lunch needs to be refrigerated or microwaved before it is served. Spoons, cups, and plates are provided for all children, including sippy cups for toddlers.

Please do not send soft drinks to school with your child, as they have a high sugar content and are unhealthy for young children, and St. Rita students are not permitted

to drink soft drinks during school hours. If your child has a soft drink in their lunchbox, we will send it back home with them and give them juice or milk instead. If your child brings a lunch that does not contain one of the required food groups, we will serve your child a food item from that food groups. For example, if you send a turkey sandwich and fruit juice, we will also serve them milk or cheese, and another fruit or vegetable, to give them a balanced and healthy diet.

Please note that the lunch is NOT provided during the summer L.O.F.T. Program, and should be sent in each day with the child. Snacks, along with milk, juice, and water will be provided.

H. INFANT MEALS:

Parents need to write out their infant's individual daily schedule for the staff, with feeding amounts and times, and update it as their child grows. Parents should send in their child's formula or breast milk, clearly labeled with their child's name. L.O.F.T. staff can prepare the formula from the can for each feeding, or parents can bring in prepared formula (in labeled bottles with name and date, and a cap) to keep in the refrigerator for 24 hours. Prepared formula bottles not consumed after 24 hours will have the formula discarded. All infant bottles and caps and toddler cups brought from home, must be clearly labeled with the child's name. Some extra cans of formula are kept in L.O.F.T. for emergencies when an infant's supply of formula runs out, but we cannot guarantee that we will have your child's specific brand of formula, so parents are encouraged to bring in extra cans of unopened formula to keep on hand.

For breast milk, all bags or bottles must be clearly labeled with the child's name and the date they are brought in (the receipt date). PLEASE NOTE: We can only keep fresh breast milk for 24 hours from the receipt date on the bottle. After 24 hours, it must be either served to the child, sent home with the parent, or dumped out, per state licensing rules. We can keep frozen breast milk for 2 weeks from the date on the bag, after which time it must be either served to the child, sent home, or thrown away.

Breast milk and prepared formula bottles are kept at room temperature for no more than 2 hours from the time they are first served to a child. Once a child drinks from the bottle, their saliva enters the bottle and begins to digest the formula or milk, so the bottle cannot be reheated or put back in the refrigerator afterwards, or saved at room temperature for longer than 2 hours. If the bottle is not completely consumed by the end of those 2 hours, the remaining milk or formula is thrown away. For this reason, it is recommended that parents bring in smaller amounts in each bottle, so they can be sure that their child will drink the entire bottle within a 2-hour period.

I. BIRTHDAYS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS

It is important to us to celebrate our students' birthdays and special occasions. Parents are welcome to send in treats to share with their child's friends. We prefer that you not send in balloons, as they can be choking hazards when popped, and some children may be allergic to latex. Please let us know in advance of your plans so that it may be smoothly coordinated.

If a parent wants to send in special treats for the class to celebrate a child's birthday, adoption day, or other special holiday, please check with the child's teacher as to any special dietary needs of other children in the class. For

example, some children may have food allergies (especially peanuts and berries), diabetes, religious food preferences, or other dietary restrictions that need to be taken into consideration when providing snacks for the entire group.

For the 2010-2011 school year, both Montessori Preschool classrooms, as well as the MSA, are peanut-free classrooms. There are children with identified peanut allergies in all of these rooms. The peanut-free restriction includes products containing peanuts, such as peanut butter and peanut butter cookies, and those containing peanut oils, such as granola bars and many cereal bars. If you do bring in treats, they should be store-bought with the nutrition label clearly visible. Please make sure they are peanut-free, and that there are enough snacks for everyone in the class.

J. REST PERIOD AND SAFE-SLEEP POLICY

All children in L.O.F.T. take a nap everyday after lunch. This is mandated by the Ohio Department of Education and cannot be changed, even for older preschoolers and pre-K. Children work hard all morning in school, and they need time to rest and relax each day. Most classes (except the nursery) schedule an hour and half for naptime each day, although some children sleep longer than that. While we do not force a child to sleep, all toddlers and preschoolers are required to remain quiet on their cots or in their beds and not disturb their friends who are sleeping. Please do not send electronic games or toys to school to entertain your child during naptime if they do not sleep during this time; they are disturbing to other children. Most children are so tired by naptime that they fall asleep, even if they don't take naps at home on weekends!

Just as we cannot force a child to sleep, we also cannot keep them awake during naptime if they want to sleep. While we understand that many parents want their child to stay awake all day so they will sleep better at night, by law we are not permitted to take away a child's opportunity to nap. This means that all children will be given the time and designated place (a cot or crib) in which to sleep during naptime, and they are allowed to fall asleep during that time.

Children in the nursery sleep in individual cribs. We provide the bedding and take care of washing each child's bedding. Parents are encouraged to bring in any familiar items from home that will assist children in sleeping in their cribs. Each crib has crib bumpers, which are permitted by Ohio Dept. of Education licensing. However, if you would prefer that we remove your child's crib bumpers, we will do so upon request. If you want your child's mattress elevated, or prefer that your child sleep on a boppy pillow in their crib to elevate their head and shoulders, you will need to provide written permission for us to do this, and provide the elevation and/or the boppy pillow.

The staff in the L.O.F.T. program follow a **safe-sleep policy** according to licensing regulations and recommendations from the Hamilton County Health Department. Infants younger than 6 months old, and older infants who are unable to roll over from their stomach to their back, are placed on their backs to sleep in their cribs. This is to decrease the incidence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Any parent who wants their infant to be placed to sleep on their stomach needs to write out a written statement giving permission for that, sign it, and return it to the L.O.F.T. Coordinator.

Children in the one-year-old group sleep in individual pack-and-play beds. Again, parents are encouraged to bring in any familiar sleep items, although blankets and sheets are provided. Blankets are sent home every 2 weeks to be washed and returned to the program, or more often if they become soiled.

At rest time, the children in the two-year-old group and in preschool sleep on cots with their own bedroll. We provide a bedroll for each child, although you may also send one in from home. You should also send in a small blanket, as the bedrolls do not include one, and children can get chilly while they are sleeping. Children in need of a more secure sleeping environment are encouraged, but not required, to bring a familiar stuffed animal or similar item that would make them comfortable. Please label everything you send in from home with your child's name. *Bedrolls and blankets are sent home every 2 weeks to be washed and returned to the program, or more often if they become soiled.*

K. DIAPERS & TOILET TRAINING

Parents supply their child's disposable diapers, pull-ups and wipes. We will mark them for identification. If a child uses cloth diapers, parents will need to bring in a covered plastic container for soiled diapers, and they must be picked up each day and laundered at home. Soiled diapers cannot be stored in the program for longer than 24 hours, per state licensing regulations. When your child is close to running out of diapers or wipes, a request for more will be written on your child's daily sheet or sent home in their backpack. We do not require children to be toilet-trained prior to preschool entry.

Toilet training is a cooperative effort, which involves the child, the teacher and the parent. There is no specific age in which a child magically leaves diapers and wears "big kid" underwear. Two years of age is the average time a child begins to be ready. However, some children are younger than two when they want to use the toilet, and some show no interest until three years of age or more. Regardless of the age, it is important to be as consistent with the child during this period as possible. That is why cooperation with the school and home is important. Please let us know when you have started this process with your child, and we will try to follow your methods here at school. However, while we can encourage a child to sit on or use the toilet, **we will not force them to do so**. We will also not punish a child for having an "accident" in their underwear. This is not effective or emotionally healthy for your child, and is also against our licensing regulations.

If your child is not yet toilet trained, but you are sending your child to school in regular underwear, there **must** be a plastic or waterproof barrier over their underwear to protect the school environment from becoming soiled by body fluids. We understand that you may want your child to "feel" when they have a toileting accident, but we also have to protect our classroom environment and the other children from contact with bodily fluids. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact the L.O.F.T. director.

Finally, there should be a balance between classroom learning time and toilet training. Sitting a child on the toilet every 30 minutes is not a realistic method of toilet training during the school day, and doing so removes the child from the learning environment to such an extent that they are no longer benefitting from our program. If you have specific

methods of toilet training that you are using, please discuss them with your child's teacher to be sure that those methods are compatible with the school setting.

L. OUTDOOR PLAY

Children will play outside as often as weather permits, including cold or windy days. As the seasons change, appropriate clothing for the weather will be needed. Please label your child's coat, hat, and gloves, with their name or initials.

A note will be left on the door of your child's classroom if they are outside. The note will direct you to the approximate location of the class, as there are 4 outside playgrounds, an indoor gym, walking trails, and the soccer fields to play on. In addition, the classes sometimes take walks around the school grounds or to the learning gardens. The kids really enjoy this, so we try to go outside as much as possible.

If you want your child to wear sunscreen when going outside, please send in a bottle of sunscreen labeled with your child's name. You will also need to complete a medication permission form and have it on file. By law, L.O.F.T. cannot provide sunscreen for your child or share sunscreen from another child with your child, even if the two children are related.

M. POLICY FOR LATE DEPARTURE

The L.O.F.T. Program closes at 6:00 p.m. A fee will be charged for all late pick-ups as listed below:

6:05 p.m. to 6:15 p.m. = \$10.00
After 6:15 p.m., \$10.00 for each 10 minutes

This fee is to cover the cost of paying staff to work after their shift ends for the day at 6:00 PM. If you are late in picking up your child on three (3) occasions, we will ask you to meet with the Director to discuss the problem and try to resolve it.

Please call the L.O.F.T. Program if you will be late. The L.O.F.T I building can be reached at (513) 326-8267. For children in preschool after-school (3-6 PM), call (513) 771-7600 x359.

If it is fifteen (15) minutes past 6:00 p.m. and we have not heard from you, the teacher will try to contact you. If that is unsuccessful, we will then call the names on the emergency contact form so that someone else can pick up your child. If we cannot reach anyone to pick up your child by 6:30, and we have not heard from you, we will contact the Evendale police department to assist us in delivering your child to a responsible adult who can care for him or her. This is a last resort, and we hope we never need to use it, but we do need to let you know what will happen if your child is left in L.O.F.T. after the program closes.

N. WEATHER EMERGENCY

Every reasonable attempt will be made to serve our families on the regular schedule when a weather emergency occurs. However, we may find it necessary to open the program with a minimum number of staff, or on an abbreviated schedule. There will also be times when the school will have to close. In that case, watch the school closings on the local TV stations (Cincinnati Channel 12)

and look for “St. Rita School for the Deaf, L.O.F.T.”. Remember that if your child is bussed to St. Rita School by their school district, and that public school district is closed, then your child’s bus will not run that day, even if St. Rita School is open. You are welcome to drive your child to and from school yourself on those days if we are open.

IV. HEALTH & SAFETY ISSUES

A. FIELD TRIP POLICIES

All children going on field trips must have a signed permission form from the parent or guardian in order to attend. Permission forms are usually sent home the week before a field trip. Children usually take the St. Rita School van or school bus for field trips. For LOFT I and LOFT II students, you will be asked to leave your child’s car seat or booster seat at school on a field trip day when you drop off your child. Staff will install the car seats in the bus or van. **Preschool students riding the bus typically use only the seat belts, as carseats are not required on school busses.** Parents who are chaperoning may drive their own child in their personal vehicle, but may not drive other children without written permission from that child’s parent.

No child is ever left alone or unsupervised on field trips, or any other time. When leaving the building for field trips, special safety rules are expected of the adults assisting. Seat belts, locked vehicle doors, and **car seats or booster seats are mandatory for all children under age 8 riding in a car or van.** A First Aid Kit must be taken on all trips. There must be at least one person certified in First Aid/CPR in the group. Each child will wear an ID tag stating his/her name, the name, address and phone number of the school, and is assigned to a specific adult for the duration of the field trip. Each child’s emergency form will accompany the group. Volunteers and chaperones usually accompany classes on field trips in order to reduce the adult-to-child ratio. If you are interested in volunteering for a field trip, please let your child’s teacher know in advance. All families are welcome to accompany their children’s classes on field trips.

Preschool classes usually have one scheduled field trip per month. Toddler classrooms take only a few field trips per school year. If a parent or guardian is unable to pay for the cost of a field trip, please contact the L.O.F.T. coordinator to discuss alternative funding options. If you do not want your child to participate in a field trip, you will need to make alternate arrangements for childcare for the day of the field trip. In every class, field trips are part of the educational curriculum, and are therefore considered part of the classroom’s regularly scheduled activities, so we want all children to participate. As such, all staff are assigned to accompany their classes on field trips, so no teachers remain behind at St. Rita to care for a child who is not going on a field trip. **Please do not bring your child to school on a day that a field trip is scheduled if you do not want your child to go on the field trip.**

B. EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Periodic fire, tornado, and/or lockdown drills are conducted by the school, and by the local Fire Department. The alarms for these incidents are both auditory and visual. A plan for emergency evacuation or weather alert is in place. These

plans are posted in each child's play area, the gym, and the office. If you are visiting your child's classroom during a drill or alarm, please assist the classroom teachers in evacuating the children to a safe area.

In the event of a lockdown procedure, no one will be admitted into the school buildings for any reasons until the "all clear" has been given. If you ask for admittance to the front office during a school lockdown, the front office staff will advise you to return to your car and lock the doors until the "all clear" has been given and the school is no longer in lockdown mode.

In the event of a catastrophic emergency that requires the evacuation of the entire school, students will be transported to Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries by school bus or van, located at 10600 Springfield Pike, Cincinnati, OH 45215.

C. MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

Staff persons have been trained, through state-approved agencies, to recognize common signs of communicable diseases and other illnesses. Qualified staff will check the children for common childhood diseases daily. The staff have completed all the necessary required hours to be certified by the State of Ohio in First Aid/CPR, Communicable Diseases, and Child Abuse Recognition, as well as training in handwashing and diapering practices. These trainings are updated every 3 years.

Staff members follow hygiene procedures set up by the State in regards to diapering, hand washing, and general cleanliness. They are also sent home when they are sick themselves. We do this in an effort to prevent the spread of disease in the program. **Please do your part by keeping your child home when he or she is ill.**

The following precautions will be taken for children suspected of having a communicable disease, and are mandated by our state licensing regulations.

- (A.) The program will immediately notify the parent if the child has been observed with signs or symptoms of illness.
- (B.) The child with any one of the following signs or symptoms of illness will be isolated **within sight of a staff member and on a cot**, and his/her parent will be contacted to come pick up the child immediately:
 - (1.) **Diarrhea and/or vomiting two or more times in a 24 hour period or during program hours.**
 - (2.) Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or makes a whooping sound. This will be similar to a dog's bark.
 - (3.) Difficult or rapid breathing.
 - (4.) Yellowish skin or eyes.
 - (5.) Conjunctivitis (pink eye).
 - (6.) Untreated infected skin (patches). Evidence of lice, scabies, or other parasitic infestation.
 - (7.) Stiff neck.

(8.) Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool.

(9.) A fever of more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit under the arm (axillary). This is the same as 101 degrees F orally, and the same as 102 degrees F rectally.

- (C.) **If a child is sent home with vomiting or diarrhea, he or she will not be allowed to return to the program on the following day.** The child must be free of vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before he or she may return to L.O.F.T. This policy is to ensure that other children in the program do not contract the same illness. We do realize that some medical conditions and medications can cause chronic diarrhea, and we have a procedure in place for that situation *as long as the diarrhea can be contained within the child's diaper or toilet.*

A child who continues to exhibit diarrhea may only return to L.O.F.T. if a) the parent provides a doctor's signed statement that the diarrhea is caused by a medication or a medical condition that is not contagious, and b) the child is either completely toilet-trained, or the diarrhea can be fully contained within a diaper, and c) the child has no other symptoms of illness (fever, vomiting, etc.). If the parent provides a doctor statement that the diarrhea is not contagious, the statement must have a date on it, and list a date range for which the child is reasonably expected to continue having non-contagious diarrhea. Doctor's statements cannot be "blanket" statements to excuse all occurrences of diarrhea for an indefinite period of time.

- (D.) If a child has an elevated temperature (normal is 98.6 degrees F orally), the staff will monitor the child for other symptoms. A low-grade temperature alone is usually not a cause to contact the parent to pick up the child. However, in connection with any of the above symptoms in Section B, or if a child is also lethargic or shows a lack of normal appetite with a low-grade fever, we will contact the parent. While a child with any elevated temperature may be sent home at the discretion of the school nurse or the L.O.F.T. Coordinator, they can usually remain at school with a low-grade temperature and no other symptoms *as long as they can benefit from the program.* For example, a preschooler with a low-grade temperature who cannot remain awake during class is clearly not benefiting from the program and will be sent home.
- (E.) If the child is experiencing a very high temperature, we will contact the parent to pick up the child immediately. A very high temperature is defined as:

Over 100 degrees F axillary (under the arm);
 Over 101 degrees F orally; or
 Over 102 degrees F rectally
(These are all the same body temperature)

Any child sent home due to a fever must be fever-free for 24 hours before returning to school. This means they cannot return the next day. An exception can be made if the child has a doctor statement, dated and signed, that verifies that the high fever is not contagious, and how long the child should be reasonably be expected to have a non-contagious high fever. “Blanket” doctor statements excusing all elevated temperatures for an extended period of time will not be accepted. While teething infants and toddlers may develop a mild fever, they can also contract illnesses causing a fever, and L.O.F.T staff cannot be responsible for determining the cause of the fever. Any child should therefore be seen by a doctor if their temperature rises that high.

- (F.) If a child is diagnosed with pink eye (conjunctivitis) or strep throat, please follow your doctor’s instructions on when the child can return to school. Usually, this is 24 hours after the start of antibiotics, as long as there is no fever.
- (G.) A child is considered “mildly ill” if he or she a) exhibits minor common cold symptoms, or b) does not feel well enough to participate in regular program activities, but does not exhibit any of the other symptoms mentioned above. The parents of a mildly ill child may, at the discretion of the school nurse or the program Coordinator, be contacted to come pick up their child if the staff is unable to meet that child’s needs in L.O.F.T.

The Program acknowledges the demanding schedule of parents who are both employed. It is with this in mind that **the Program requires that there is someone (a back up person) who can come and get the child if the child becomes ill at school and the parent cannot come to get him/her.** That person’s name, address, and telephone number will be in the child’s personal folder in the classroom and in the main school office file.

If a child has been exposed to a contagious disease he/she should be kept at home and the fact of this condition reported to the school. In the event that children enrolled in L.O.F.T are exposed to a contagious disease while in the program, all parents of enrolled children will be notified in writing that their child was exposed to a contagious disease and will describe the symptoms of that disease. Parents are strongly encouraged to monitor their child’s health and behavior at home and to watch for any symptoms in their child. Please do not send your sick child to L.O.F.T., as he or she will not only be too ill to participate in the program, but may also infect other children, staff, and families in the program.

A complete text of the Ohio Department of Education’s communicable disease policy for childcare and preschool programs can be found on the web at <http://education.ohio.gov/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDetail.aspx?page=3&TopicRelationID=804&ContentID=1435&Content=55434>. Click on the webpage’s link to “Preschool Licensing Rules” and scroll down to “Communicable Diseases”. In addition, a communicable disease chart is posted in every classroom and lists the timeframe that a child is contagious for most illnesses or infections, and how long they are excluded from the program due to that illness or infection.

D. OTHER SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

PLEASE DO NOT SPEED WHILE ON SCHOOL PROPERTY.

The speed limit on St. Rita School property is **5 mph**. As parents yourselves, you are probably very safety conscious about your own child playing near roads and traffic, and you already know that your child does not truly understand the dangers posed by traffic. Please remember that many children are present on school grounds and they do not always pay attention to traffic. If you are speeding and a child runs out in front of you, you will not be able to stop before hitting that child. You cannot depend on your car horn to stop children, as there are Deaf children present, and even hearing children need time to process what they hear and take action to get out of the way. There is a **STOP SIGN** in front of the little L.O.F.T. building to remind you that children exiting that building often run down the ramp and forget to stop before entering the road; adults also cross that area of the drive frequently throughout the day, **and parents are loading and unloading their children in front of the L.O.F.T. building.** Please slow down while driving, and stop at all stop signs. Always look for children walking near the driveway or roads on campus, and stay to the right and use extra caution when driving around the curve toward the little L.O.F.T building – little ones take walks there!

The use of spray aerosols is prohibited when children are present. No smoking is permitted when children are present, or anywhere in school buildings or on school grounds. All classroom materials are nontoxic and safe for children. Children wash their hands with soap and water after playing outside, completing art activities, or using the restroom, and before eating. No medication can be kept in backpacks, cubbies, or pockets. No alcohol is permitted in the classroom or playgrounds during program hours. No guns or other weapons are permitted on school grounds. Exterior doors are kept locked from the inside at all times.

All staff at St. Rita School for the Deaf receive a full **fingerprint** background check, both state and FBI, prior to being hired. This is our policy for ALL staff and volunteers, not just those working directly with your child in LOFT. Volunteers under the age of 18 may not legally be background checked, due to their status as a minor. Parents wishing to volunteer at the school must also receive a background check. Background checks are repeated according to the schedule outlined in Ohio's licensing standards for teachers, speech therapists, and preschool programs, as they apply to each individual staff member.

E. MEDICATIONS, PHYSICAL EXAMS, CARE PLANS, & NURSING CARE

All children who receive medication administered by L.O.F.T. staff must have a medication permission form on file for each medication. Prescription medications must be in their original prescription bottle, and the permission form must be signed by the physician who prescribed the medication. Many pharmacies will give you a second prescription bottle so that you can bring one to school and leave one at home. Parents should provide the dosing instrument for their child, such as a medication spoon or cup. Medications should be given directly to the teacher rather than placed in a child's backpack or pocket.

Non-prescription medications, including over-the-counter pain relievers, topical teething ointments, and other nonprescription medications, must also be in their

original containers and labeled with the child's name, and the **parents and physician must sign the medication permission form for each medication**, even though it does not need a prescription. While we are aware that many doctors charge a fee to sign paperwork, we cannot change this policy – it is a state licensing requirement. Diaper rash creams, sunscreen, and lip balm must also have a medication permission form signed by the parent, but they will not need a physician signature as they are topical rather than ingested. All medications can only be given according to the manufacturer's instructions on the label, and will be given by the classroom teacher or school nurse. **Medication forms for topical medications, such as diaper rash and sunscreen, are valid for 3 months from the date of parent signature. Medication forms for prescription medications are valid for one year from the date of physician signature.**

Any medications brought to school without a medication permission form cannot be administered to the child, even if the prescription is for that child. All medications will be kept out of reach of the children in the program, and, by law, no child will be permitted to measure out their own medication or to share their medication with other children, even relatives. This means that one child's sunscreen or diaper rash cream cannot be used by another child, even a sibling, cousin or family friend.

For all medications, a treatment log will be completed by each staff person who administers the medication. This log will be located on the back of the permission form for that medication. Any other routine medical procedures performed by the staff, such as blood sugar testing or peak flow meter testing, will be recorded on a separate treatment log along with the results of the test. This form will be accessible and available to the respective child's parents during program hours.

Any medication that is left in the program and has expired will be sent home with the child. Staff cannot administer any medication that has passed its expiration date. If your child has a medication that is left in the classroom long-term, such as an Epi-Pen or Diastat, please check the expiration date and replace it before it expires. If a child withdraws from the program, any medication left in the program will be disposed of properly.

All children in LOFT are required to have a physical exam, with a form signed by their doctor, prior to enrollment. In addition, they are required to have a new physical exam every 13 months thereafter. A copy of the physical exam form must be signed by the physician and submitted to the school nurse each year. A copy of current immunizations should accompany the form. For families with cultural or religious objections to immunizations, a waiver form must be signed by the parents and submitted to the school nurse. The annual physical exam CANNOT be waived.

Any child with a chronic medical condition will be required to have a written care plan on file. Care plans are developed between the family, the teacher, the L.O.F.T. Coordinator, and the nurse at St. Rita School. In some cases, the child's physician may be a part of developing the care plan as well. Care plans describe the child's medical condition and state each person's responsibilities in managing that condition while the child attends L.O.F.T. Some examples of chronic medical conditions are asthma, diabetes, seizures, and food allergies with life-threatening reactions that require the use of an Epi-Pen. At least one L.O.F.T. staff person in each classroom has been trained in how to administer an Epi-Pen and Diastat.

Please be advised that if we have to administer Diastat or an Epi-Pen to your child, we will also be calling 911 for an ambulance. While we know that some parents may not want an ambulance called after Diastat or an Epi-Pen are given, or the doctor who prescribed the medication may not believe it is necessary, it is still our program's policy to do so anyway to protect the health of the child. Diastat may bring a child out of a seizure, but the child may still have difficulties with breathing or their heart rate afterward that would require medical care. An Epi-Pen can stop a severe allergic reaction, but the reaction could reoccur within 20-30 minutes and be much more severe than the initial reaction. Therefore, we will always call 911 immediately after administering either of these medications. We will also contact the child's parent or guardian to let them know about the situation and have them meet the ambulance crew.

There is a nurse present each day at St. Rita School until 2:45 PM during the school year (not during summer L.O.F.T.), and she is on-call after 2:45 PM. The nurse is available to consult with staff about potential illnesses or any symptoms of illness or injury of a child in L.O.F.T. If the nurse states that a child is too ill to remain at L.O.F.T, the parent will be contacted to pick up the child. The nurse does not usually administer medication or provide medical treatments in L.O.F.T. unless the medication is a controlled substance (such as medication for ADHD) or an injection (such as insulin for diabetic children). Classroom staff administer all other medications.

Most of the L.O.F.T. staff have been trained and certified in First Aid and CPR for infants, children, and adults. If a child needs CPR, an ambulance will also be called. If a child is choking to the point that they need First Aid for choking (previously called the Heimlich maneuver), we will also call 911 for an ambulance. This is because the item that was blocking the airway and causing the child to choke could have caused damage or irritation to the airway, resulting in swelling that could block the airway again. Therefore, we will call for an ambulance to check on the child's health and immediate safety. As with any 911 call, we will also contact the child's parent or guardian to let them know about the situation and have them meet the ambulance crew.

Occasionally, children with special health care needs are admitted to the program and are accompanied by a private nurse. In these instances, the nurse is only responsible for the child who is their patient. The nurse is NOT responsible for any other children, and other children cannot be left in the nurse's care. In addition, the nurse will not be able to answer questions about another child's activities in the program. The nurse is not an employee of St. Rita School for the Deaf, but is instead employed by the child's parent or guardian, or the child's public school district. The nurse's sole duty is the care of their patient's medical needs rather than their educational needs.

V. DISCIPLINE & REPORTING POLICY

A. CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE

According to the State of Ohio, Department of Education Licensing Standards, our preschool program must have a written discipline policy describing our

philosophy of discipline and the specific methods of discipline used in our program. Our policy includes the following:

- There is no cruel, harsh, or corporal punishment, or any unusual punishments such as, but not limited to, punching, pinching, shaking, spanking or biting.
- No discipline is ever delegated to any other child, even an older sibling.
- No physical restraints shall be used to confine a child by any means other than holding a child for a short period of time, such as in a protective hug, so the child may regain control.
- No child shall be placed in a locked room or confined in an enclosed area such as a closet, a box or a similar cubicle.
- No child shall be subjected to profane language, threats, or derogatory remarks about himself or his family or other verbal abuse.
- Discipline shall not be imposed on a child for failure to eat, failure to sleep, or for toileting accidents.
- Techniques of discipline shall not humiliate, shame or frighten a child.
- Discipline shall not include withholding food, rest or toilet use.
- Separation, when used as discipline, shall be brief in duration and appropriate to the child's age and developmental ability. The child shall be within sight and hearing of a preschool staff member in a safe, lighted and well-ventilated space.
- The center shall not abuse or neglect children and shall protect children from abuse and neglect while in attendance in the preschool program.
- The parent of a child enrolled in a center shall receive the center's written discipline policy.
- All preschool staff members receive a copy of the center's discipline policy for review upon employment.

All staff are trained in the program's discipline policy. Each child is treated with respect and concern for his/her developmental needs. Guidance and discipline are positive, productive, non-punitive, appropriate to the situation and specific to each child's development. Encouragement to express one's feelings, redirection, natural consequences, and problem-solving techniques are the primary methods used in the L.O.F.T. Program. Sensory diet stations are utilized in the preschool classrooms to help children who become over-stimulated in class. Providing a clear explanation to the child, followed by redirection, is the most common way to deal with behavior problems. This allows the child to learn to control his or her own behavior in the future.

Efforts are made to avoid the use of "NO" repeatedly, and when used will be followed by an explanation. Physical or corporal punishment is NOT used in L.O.F.T., nor is any punishment involving the withdrawal of food, toileting, or rest used in the program. Time-outs are used when appropriate and are usually designed to give children a chance to calm down before rejoining the group.

Focusing on individual respect, children are not humiliated or subjected to profane language or any other verbal abuse. We will not use techniques that shame or frighten a child. Name-calling is not permitted at any time. Praise is given for appropriate desired behavior, and children are taught to find intrinsic satisfaction for following classroom rules. A "traffic light" system is used in the preschool classrooms to provide a visual reinforcement to children of their behavior and its consequences.

In case of physical fighting, the teacher may pick up the children involved and physically separate them to stop the fighting. They may also hold them in a hug until they stop trying to hit, kick, bite, or pinch the teacher or another child. **An incident report will be sent home to parents when this occurs.** Physical punishment and/or physical restraints are prohibited and are not used. A child who is physically aggressive towards others or himself or herself may be placed in a separate area until the danger to self and others has passed. In situations where the child is habitually hurting self and others, or whose behavior elicits concern from the staff/parents, then a conference will be called with the parents to establish a plan of action. If that plan of action includes hiring an expert, such as a Child Psychologist, to assist with the child's issues, the school cannot assume this expense. However, the school can assist in referring families to specific agencies that provide behavior management and counseling, and that have personnel who can sign.

St. Rita School for the Deaf reserves the right to ask a child to leave the program if there are clear evident signs that it is not helping the child, and/or a child is a consistent major disruption to the other children in their program.

B. SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT

As mandated reporters for children by the State of Ohio, each staff member is required to be trained in recognizing and preventing Child Abuse – this takes place when they are hired. They, along with the Director, Coordinator, and School Counselor will evaluate any suspected abuse or neglect situation. As mandated reporters for child abuse by the State of Ohio, each staff member is required by law to report any suspicion of abuse – they do not need to wait for evidence to prove a suspicion before reporting to the authorities. Failure to do so would constitute breaking the law on their part and they would be subject to its consequences. (Section 2151.421 of the Ohio revised code.) In some cases, Children's Protective Services (241-KIDS in Hamilton County) may be called. The full text of St. Rita School for the Deaf's policy on reporting child abuse and neglect can be found in the school's Parent Handbook that was distributed with your child's registration materials prior to the beginning of the school year, and is available on the school's website.

VI. SPEECH THERAPY & AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

A. SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

If your child is Deaf, hard-of-hearing, or apraxic, he or she may receive speech therapy and/or audiology services from St. Rita School for the Deaf. If they do, these therapies will take place between 7:45 AM and 2:45 PM on days that the main school is in session. Your child may be removed from their classroom by the therapist for individual therapy, and returned to the class afterward. If your child is absent on their scheduled therapy day or time, the therapists may not be able to make up the missed therapy time later in the week. Their schedules are usually full, and they cannot cancel another child's therapy in order to see your child if he or she is absent for the scheduled therapy time.

In order for your child to receive speech therapy from St. Rita School, he or she must first be evaluated by an outside speech therapist and a recommendation given for speech therapy. A copy of that evaluation must be provided to St.

Rita's speech therapists before therapy can begin. Please remember that our speech therapists must see all of the students at St. Rita School, not just those in L.O.F.T., so they may not be able to provide the frequency of speech therapy that is recommended in your child's private speech evaluation. Our speech therapists provide therapy to meet a child's *educational* needs, but should not be used as a substitute for outpatient speech therapy at a clinic or hospital to meet the full range of a child's *developmental and medical* needs. For example, our speech therapists do not provide therapy focused on feeding or swallowing, as this is a specialized medical need and beyond the scope of their position within the school setting.

Speech therapy may be provided individually or in small groups, depending on the needs of the children, and takes place in 25-minute sessions. The frequency of therapy is generally once per week for infants and toddlers. **Preschoolers who are contracted by their public school district to St. Rita School for the Deaf will receive therapy in accordance with their IEP.**

The following paragraphs outline the procedure for obtaining speech therapy for children who are NOT contracted to St. Rita School for the Deaf by their public school district.

1. For children under the age of 3, our speech therapists can provide a brief screening for your child to help you decide if he or she needs a full speech therapy evaluation, but they cannot provide the full evaluation themselves. **Families are expected to use their county early intervention services for speech therapy.** These services are free of charge. For information on your county's early intervention program in Ohio, please call 1-800-755-GROW. In Kentucky, call 1-800-442-0087. In Indiana, call 1-800-441-STEP.

Speech therapy to supplement your own outpatient or early intervention therapy *may* be provided one time per week by St. Rita School if the therapists have room in their schedules. In this case, our speech therapists will need parent permission to collaborate with the child's private therapist to avoid a conflict in services. If your child attends the L.O.F.T. program on an individual budget through Hamilton County Board of MRDD as part of their IFSP, speech therapy will be provided weekly by St. Rita School for the Deaf until the child exits the Help Me Grow Program.

2. For children age 3 and up, families who suspect a speech delay for their child may request that their child be screened by our speech therapists and/or the classroom teacher. This is not a substitute for a full speech evaluation, but can give families an idea if they should pursue a more in-depth evaluation outside of St. Rita School for their child. If there are speech concerns, or a diagnosis of hearing loss or apraxia has already been made, families should contact their local public school district for an evaluation (ETR). This evaluation, which includes a speech evaluation, is free of charge and will determine if the child is eligible for an Individualized Education Program (IEP). If a child is eligible for an IEP based on a speech delay or hearing loss, the IEP should include free speech therapy from the public school district as a service for the child. St. Rita School therapists CANNOT provide speech therapy to any child over age 3 who does not have an IEP or a Service Plan.

3. If a preschool child has an IEP with their public school district, and their district does not contract preschool services to St. Rita School for the Deaf for that child, then the family may choose to keep their child at St. Rita School for the Deaf as a parental placement. The public school would not be responsible for tuition at St. Rita School. If this is the case, families should choose ONE of the following options:
- a. A family may choose to send their child to St. Rita School for the Deaf for half-days, 4 days per week, at their own expense, and then transport their child to their public school district's preschool program for the other half-day. Public school programs usually meet Monday-Thursday for a half-day session. If families choose this option, their child **MUST** attend St. Rita School for the Deaf in the morning, and then their public school in the afternoons. Children can attend St. Rita all day on Fridays, or when their public school program is closed. Speech therapy would be provided by the public school district within their half-day program, and would not be duplicated by St. Rita School for the Deaf.
 - b. A child may receive itinerant speech therapy services from their school district as outlined in an IEP. The child would attend St. Rita School for the Deaf daily at the parents' expense, and their itinerant speech therapy services could take place either at home or at St. Rita School for the Deaf if the public school district agrees to send their therapist to St. Rita School. Itinerant services on an IEP are always provided by the public school district's therapists, not ours. In this case, St. Rita would not be providing duplicate speech therapy services.
 - c. The family may choose to withdraw their child from their public school district and request speech therapy services from St. Rita School for the Deaf. In this case, the family will need to meet with the L.O.F.T. Coordinator and the Executive Director to change the IEP to a Service Plan and set up speech therapy services with St. Rita School's therapists. In this case, the public school district would not be providing any services to the child.

B. AUDIOLOGY

In order for your child to receive audiology services at St. Rita, you will need to provide a copy of their most recent audiogram to our audiologist. This will be kept on file, but please provide updated copies each time your child has a new audiogram. Our audiologist will test your child's hearing once per year, but this is not a substitute for outpatient audiology services at a clinic or hospital.

Our audiologist cannot fit your child for hearing aids, order personal hearing aids, evaluate your child for a cochlear implant, or map your child's cochlear implant. Our audiologist can provide individual auditory training during your child's school day as well as joint therapy sessions with our speech therapists, and she can check children's hearing aids and cochlear implants daily to ensure that they are working properly. Our audiologist also sets up the FM systems for individual students (L.O.F.T. II and preschool) in their classrooms, provides batteries for aids and implant processors as needed, and consults with

teachers regarding auditory training activities in the classroom. For a small fee, the audiologist can also make new ear molds for your child.

Please note that auditory training (aural rehab) and FM systems are *only* provided for students who wear hearing aids or a cochlear implant. Deaf students who are unaided will not receive these audiology services. If your child does not bring their hearing aids or cochlear implant to school on a day that they are scheduled for auditory training, they will not receive audiology services on that day. Please remember to send your child to school with their hearing aids or cochlear implant processor everyday. If your child's hearing aids are not working, we can still use their ear molds to connect to their individual FM system aids, so please send the ear molds into school with them.

C. OTHER THERAPIES

St. Rita School for the Deaf does not provide physical or occupational therapy. With your permission, therapists from outpatient clinics, public schools, or early intervention programs are welcome to visit your child in the L.O.F.T. program and provide therapy services at school during the days your child is attending. However, this must be set up in advance by the parents, and St. Rita School for the Deaf does not pay for or endorse these services. There is a signing occupational therapist from Cincinnati Occupational Therapy Institute who sees students from Preschool through 12th grade at St. Rita School for the Deaf, but she is contracted through each child's public school district, and is not an employee of St. Rita School for the Deaf. She cannot see students at St. Rita School without a contract with their school district as part of the child's IEP.

VII. SUMMER L.O.F.T (JUNE-JULY-AUGUST)

Summer L.O.F.T usually operates for nine weeks during the summer, and is open to currently enrolled L.O.F.T. students age 0-5 who will NOT be entering Kindergarten in the Fall immediately after Summer L.O.F.T. It is much more of a recreational program than the regular school year is, and most parents use it for childcare or to maintain socialization and communication for their children during the summer months. Most staff are not certified teachers (except for preschool for ESY), although they are supervised by a certified teacher (the L.O.F.T. Director), and the program structure changes to reflect that. Activities are play-based, and the children spend a lot of time outside. In addition, some classes may be combined (i.e. the preschool classrooms combine into one class) due to the small number of children enrolled in summer L.O.F.T. Preschool does not follow the Montessori curriculum or teaching methods during the summer program, although they do use some Montessori materials. The curriculum content is a reinforcement of the material taught over the previous school year, rather than introducing new academic content.

Speech therapy and audiology services are not provided during the summer months, except through Extended School Year (ESY) Services on a child's IEP. There is also not a nurse on staff during the summer program. The summer staff try to schedule a variety of field trips, based on availability of transportation, and parents are encouraged to help chaperone their child's class on these trips.

During the summer program, the St. Rita School's cafeteria is closed. While snacks will be provided, the children must bring their own lunch. There are refrigerators and microwaves available for lunches, and milk and juice will be available from the school.

Due to the nature of the school year, most maintenance and cleaning of our building occurs during the summer. As a result, your child's class will be relocated during a short part of the summer (usually 1-2 weeks) while their classroom is cleaned or painted. Parents will be notified in advance when this will take place.

There is always a one-week break between summer L.O.F.T and the start of the new school year. **During this week, L.O.F.T is closed to all children.** This allows the staff to complete their in-service training requirements and to prepare their classrooms for the new school year.

VIII. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are encouraged to become active participants in the Program. We urge parents to discuss with the staff members ways you wish to participate and/or in what capacity. Parents are always encouraged to accompany their child's class on field trips in the community, as well as to visit the class for birthday celebrations or special holidays. We do not typically allow parents to volunteer within their own child's classroom outside of field trips or parties, as it is too distracting for the children to see mom or dad in their classroom when it is not time to go home, but parents are welcome to volunteer in other classrooms or in the office area. If you are interested in volunteering anywhere at St. Rita, you can complete a volunteer registration form in the development office. Once you complete your volunteer orientation and your background check through the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, you will be ready to start volunteering!

Parents are welcome and encouraged to observe their child in the Program. We ask for prior notification of your visit as any guest is "special" and usually changes the routine; however, you always have the right to drop in unannounced at any time. Anytime you are in the school building, you will need to sign in at the front office as a visitor when you arrive so we will know who is in the building.

If you wish to discuss anything with a staff member, please set that up ahead of time, if possible. That way, time can be properly set aside and the staff member can be totally attentive to the parent. Meeting with staff during their work hours is generally not feasible, as the children must be safely attended to at all times. Appointments can be made before or after school, during nap times, or when a substitute person can replace the staff member.

Parent/Teacher conferences and email are excellent ways to learn what is happening in your child's class, to discuss issues that affect your child or your family, or to receive information on relevant issues pertaining to your child's education and growth. We encourage parents to work closely with the staff to ensure that each child is receiving optimal enrichment from the Program.

Parent Conferences for all classrooms are scheduled twice a year by the staff. Additional meetings are held at the request of the parent. In addition, the Director is always willing to discuss with you any concerns or problems you may have regarding your child or the Program itself.

One of the best ways for parents to participate in their child's early childhood education here in L.O.F.T. is for parents and other family members to learn American Sign Language, and use it at home with your child. Your child is in a bilingual program, and both of those language should be support by hearing parents at home. Sign language classes are offered at St. Rita School for the Deaf on Wednesday evenings, and by other providers in the community (Cincinnati State College, Sinclair Community College in Mason and Dayton, UC, Xavier University, and Community Services for the Deaf). Hearing parents are **STRONGLY** encouraged to take sign classes as soon as your child begins in the L.O.F.T. program, and to become involved in the Deaf Community through Silent Dinners and other local events.

In addition, there are several activities scheduled throughout the school year for families and L.O.F.T. students to attend and interact with other families. The St. Rita Festival takes place every July. The scholarship dinner in November is always a fun opportunity for parents to get to know one another, and see the signing choir perform. The preschoolers perform in the Christmas play in December. Open House is held in April for the entire school. Sally's Walk and Family Picnic is held in May. The Apraxia Parent Support Group meets one Friday of every month and schedules play groups outside of that time as well. Notices of these activities are usually sent home in your child's backpack each Thursday. All families are welcomed and encouraged to attend.

IX. PAYMENT POLICY

Enrollment guarantees a child a reserved space in the Program. The cost of your tuition pays for your child's space in the program for the full school year, for all of the days scheduled on the school calendar, whether the child is present or not. Holidays and breaks are already factored into the yearly tuition, so there is not a "reduction" in monthly tuition for these days. Spring Break is optional, and listed separately on the tuition contract. This includes the Tuesday-Friday after Easter, as the whole school, including L.O.F.T., is closed for Good Friday and the following Monday in observance of Easter.

All families must sign a tuition contract prior to the child's first day of school. The tuition contract indicates the amount due for the current school year, payable in a lump sum or divided into 9 equal monthly installments over the school year, depending on the families' choice. Summer LOFT is billed on a separate tuition contract, and can be paid in one lump sum or spread out over 3 monthly payments. Families who have childcare vouchers are responsible for their co-payment each month. Tuition is due in full each month even when a child is absent from the program or the program is closed for a holiday or snow day.

Payment to St. Rita School for the Deaf is typically due the first of the month for the upcoming month. Payments must be made by check or money order,

made out to St. Rita School for the Deaf, with your child's name on the memo line. No cash is accepted for record keeping purposes. If your child is absent from school when school is in session, payment is still due.

If your child's public school district has agreed in writing on your child's IEP to contract preschool services to St. Rita School for the Deaf, then you do not need to pay the full tuition for the school year of that IEP. Summer L.O.F.T tuition is separate from the regular school year, however, and is not the responsibility of the school district unless they have agreed to pay for Extended School Year (ESY) Services. This has to be documented on your child's IEP and must be agreed upon by both your school district and St. Rita School for the Deaf.

St. Rita School for the Deaf accepts childcare vouchers from Ohio Department of Job and Family Services in both Hamilton and Butler Counties, and may consider funding from other counties' ODJFS if a L.O.F.T. family requests it. The program also accepts funding from Hamilton County Board of Developmental Disability Services, through the individual budget program for children ages 0-3 with an IFSP; from the ARC of Hamilton County's Family Resources program; and from a child's local public school district for children ages 3-21 with an IEP. The program also provides some scholarship funding to families, based on income. Families can apply for scholarship funding by completing a request for financial assistance through the Executive Director.

If your payments cannot be made on time, the parent is expected to contact the Executive Director, Greg Ernst, at 771-7600 x316 so that arrangements can be made. If payments are more than two weeks late, without contact with the Director, then your child may be excluded from the program.

Families' cancelled checks are their receipt for tuition, so please keep them on file. A year-end statement for taxes will be provided in January, if requested. The school's tax ID number is available upon request.

X. CONCLUSION

Thank you for your cooperation in making the L.O.F.T program a fun, educational, and nurturing experience for your child. The staff and administration are committed to cultivating your child's social and emotional development, while facilitating their communication skills in both signing and voicing. The strong academic and developmental focus, as well as the emphasis on positive social communication skills, creates a solid foundation for your child's early development.

However, there is only so much that we as teachers can do without the support of you, the parent. Parents and family members are their children's primary teachers, and we are here to supplement what you have already started teaching your child at home and in your community. Parents are encouraged to take sign language classes to further their signing skills with their child at home, and to explore the resources section of our school website. Please let us know if there is anything that we can do to help you or your child as they grow and develop. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your child's journey through early childhood!

L.O.F.T. CONTACT INFORMATION**Nursery and One-Year-Old Class (L.O.F.T I - separate building)**

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-326-8267 or 513-771-7600 x337
 Video Phone: 513-771-0337

Staff Name (1 year olds):	Email	Voice Mail Extension (messages)
Connie Colwell	ccolwell@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x408
Megan Neal	mneal@srsdeaf.org	N/A
Nichol Neal (2-6 pm)	nichol.neal@nkhsafety.com	513-771-7600 x430

Staff Name (Nursery):	Email	Voice Mail Extension (messages)
Mary Jane Ernst	mjernst25@yahoo.com	N/A
Mary Kammer (8-5 pm)	mkroses@tmail.com	N/A
Pam Perdue (2-6 pm)	pamper@sprint.blackberry.net	N/A

Two-Year-Old (L.O.F.T II) Class (Room 410)

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-771-7600 x349
 Video Phone: 513-771-0411

Staff Name	Email	Voice Mail Extension (messages)
Adrienne Sumney	asumney@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x442
Tracy Welch	twelch@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x453
Paige Heitfield	pheitfield@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x
Melissa Ofori-Attah		N/A
Becky Pennington (2-6 pm)	rebecca.pennington13@gmail.com	
Kathy Neal (2-6 pm)	kathy.neal@nkhsafety.com	513-771-7600 x431

Preschool – (Room 422)

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-771-7600 x344
 Video Phone: 513-771-0422

Staff Name	Email	Voice Mail Extension
Nicole Cherry	ncherry@srsdeaf.org	N/A
Wendy Corrado	wcorrado@srsdeaf.org	N/A
Dawn Roza	droza@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x437
Catherine (Kitty) Stroud	cstroud@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x434
Melissa Gregory (8-4 PM)	mgregory@srsdeaf.org	N/A
Erica Ricketts (3-6 PM)		

Preschool – (Room 201)

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-771-7600 x330
 Video Phone: 513-771-0350

Staff Name	Email	Voice Mail Extension (messages)
Jennifer Meister	jmeister@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x427
Amber Kaufman	akaufman@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x416
Denise Ott	dott@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x433
Jennifer Meister (4-6 PM)	jmeister@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x427
Michelle Hanning (2-6 PM)	cabbiegirl25@yahoo.com	N/A

Additional L.O.F.T Staff	Email	Voice Mail Extension (messages)
Ashley Dinari -Fulltime Sub	adinari@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x409
Jessica Belwood - Sub	jbelwood@srsdeaf.org	N/A

L.O.F.T. Director's Office (Rebecca Hardesty)

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-771-7600 x342
 Video Phone: 513-771-0413
 Email: Rhardesty@srsdeaf.org

Executive Director (Greg Ernst, Sr.)

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-771-7600 x316
 Video Phone: 513-771-0316
 Email: Gernst@srsdeaf.org

Bookkeeper (Jane Stigler)

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-771-7600 x318
 Video Phone: 513-771-0336
 Email: jstigler@srsdeaf.org

Main Office (Christi Hughes)

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-771-7600
 Video Phone: 513-771-0310
 Email: chughes@srsdeaf.org

School Nurse (Marnie MacBeth)

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-771-7600 x327
 Email: nursestrita@tmail.com

Audiologist (Elizabeth Ryerson-Flynn)

Phone (voice/TTY): 513-771-7600 x338
 Email: Eryerson@srsdeaf.org

Speech Therapists

Therapist Name	Email	Voice Mail Extension (messages)
Sharon Antunes	santunes@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x402
Jessy Burns	jburns@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x450
Annette Cosgrove	acosgrove@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x451
Kim Kurtz	kkurtz@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x418
Karen Rosen	krosen@srsdeaf.org	513-771-7600 x436

Occupational Therapists (From Cincinnati Occupational Therapy Institute)

<u>Therapist Name</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Voice Mail Extension</u>
Lisa Skowronski, OTR/L	lisajotr@fuse.net	
Ila Pilon, OT	ihiserman@gmail.com	

All messages regarding absentees in LOFT I & II should be left with the classroom teacher, or in the general voice mail box for your child's class. For preschool absences, or to notify us of a change in your child's bus schedule for the day, please leave a message with the front office.

SIGNATURE PAGE – L.O.F.T FAMILY HANDBOOK

I have received the L.O.F.T. Family Handbook for 2010-2011 and agree to comply with the policies stated within for my enrolled child(ren).

Child's Name(s): _____

Parent's signature: _____

Date: _____

**PLEASE SIGN ABOVE, AND RETURN JUST THIS PAGE TO THE L.O.F.T./
PRESCHOOL DIRECTOR.**